

Diet and yours dogs health - Arthritis

Natural animal practitioner Susan Scott agrees that a dogs diet plays a big part in managing arthritis. Arthritis is a result of toxicity in the body caused by eating an incorrect diet made up of dry or processed foods, she says.

The toxicity starts to accumulate in the joints, and the body needs to find a way to get rid of it, so it will come out in the skin or accumulate in the joints, she explains.

Your dogs best defence against arthritis is a raw-food diet just like its canine ancestors ate – according to Scott. In the wild, they didnt eat cooked grains; they were omnivores like us, eating meat and vegetables, she tells Dogs Life.

A large portion of their diet was also the gastrointestinal contents or droppings of grass-fed animals, and anything decomposing because they were the scavengers of the wild, she adds.

A raw-food diet should consist of a mixture of pulped up vegetables and meaty bones. Use chicken or lamb and occasionally beef. The meat should be left on the bone and be butcher-quality meat, Scott advises, adding to be cautious about buying packaged pet food that have preservatives and colourings.

Vegetables need to be finely pulped using a blender. Fruit can be mashed and they should all be ripe. The vegetable pulp can also be mixed with coconut milk. Recommended fruits and vegetables include:

- Apples high in fibre and sweetens the other vegetables.
- Carrots full of vitamins and contain the anti-oxidant beta-carotene.
- Celery the best vegetable for moving uric acid out of the body, which is a major cause of arthritis.
- Beetroot cleanses and detoxifies the body.
- Parsley helps to eliminate toxins (specific for the whole urinary tract).
- Pawpaw contains an enzyme called papain, which helps to break down the enzymes in meat.

You can also feed your dog bananas, broccoli and cauliflower.

Foods to avoid

Onions are toxic to dogs. You should also avoid vegetables from the nitrate family – tomato, potato, capsicum or eggplant, as these can aggravate arthritis, according to Scott.

If you are changing the diet of your older dog, Scott advises not to feed your dog raw meat initially you will need to partially cook the meat, or you will aggravate the problem, she says. Scott recommends seeking professional guidance from a natural practitioner when changing your older dog over to a raw-food diet.

Changing your dogs diet is a detox process that will help your dog be happy, fitter, healthier and pain-free, Scott says. There are other additives that can also help:

- Psyllium – to clean the bowel.
- Apple cider vinegar and alfalfa – to help neutralise acidity.
- Burdock or Yellow Dock – to purify the blood.
- Devils Claw an anti-inflammatory herb.
- White willow bark to help with arthritic pain.

Caution

Feeding raw bones carries a small chance of being harmful to your dog - there is a slight risk of infections with raw bones and there is the chance that bones may get stuck in your dog's mouth or digestive tract (slightly more likely with cooked bones as they are harder to digest). It is important to choose appropriate sized bones. Speak to you veterinarian for more advice. Dr Graham Swinney, ASAVA (Australian Small Animal Veterinary Association).

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